

## **RESPECTING BELIEF especially RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL BELIEF**

The Church follows commonsense in saying that a belief should be firmly opposed if it is wrong. It says it needs to be shown false.

To respect beliefs that do no good at all - such as original sin - would be very wrong. Catholics might say that original sin is good for it gives us a reason to get their babies baptised. But that is getting good out of the doctrine. It does not mean the doctrine is good. You can get good out of anything bad. And who says a baptism of a baby is good?

To respect belief is to respect the idea that we should be dogmatic about things that don't matter for they don't do us any good. Beliefs that do harm deserve less respect.

If people claim the right to believe what they want, then they must respect your right to believe that you should tell them if you think that belief is wrong.

Religious believers claim to have the right to indoctrinate you if they get you as a child, they claim the right to put up shrines and crosses and churches to promote their faith and to shove their religious leaflets through your door. They claim the right to keep a religious influence in the government. Surely then you have the right to point out errors in their faith.

If you have the wrong beliefs, that is bad. A doctor is a bad doctor no matter if he has the purest and kindest heart in the world if his beliefs about what he can do are wrong. The believers accuse those who disagree with them of being bad persons whether they realise it or not. Therefore you have the right to expect the believers to listen to your criticisms. You have the right to ask them.

If you try to show a Catholics why their faith is wrong, some people will say you are doing them a disservice and removing a source of comfort from them. But if you say nothing you deprive them of the opportunity and the choice to be free and to find something new and better.

A Catholic who does not listen to the reasons why his religion is wrong is not respecting you. This person is not confident that his religion is what it claims to be and it claims to be the truth. Truth should be able to withstand all questions and attacks. People who say, "Our religion is the religion of the truth", should welcome questions and challenges from doubters and unbelievers.

The person that is truly sincere will seek challenges. If believers are insincere then they have no faith for us to respect.

Sincere belief welcomes criticism. It is not afraid. It seeks criticism and criticises itself in order to purify itself.

Praising the sincerity does not mean praising the error or overlooking it. If you really believe the person sincere you will point the error out. Go and do it.

Believers who are confident will not mind if somebody criticises their beliefs for it gives them the chance to learn and understand their faith better. They will appreciate it that somebody is interested in the faith.

Most people who forbid you to say anything critical about their religious beliefs will accuse you of disrespecting their beliefs if you do. Even if they claim to be religious liberals, they are fundamentalists. It is fundamentalism to keep religious critics quiet or to refuse to listen to them.

You can point out faults but this is not disrespect as long as it is constructive and intended to help.

The Catholics protest when their belief are criticised and they allege that the critics are not respecting Catholic beliefs. But beliefs are not entitled to respect.

Ideas and beliefs do not deserve respect unless they are wholesome and very likely true. It is people that deserve respect. Deserve means be entitled to or earn or merit.

People need to be rescued from false hope. Do we stand there silent and let women spend a fortune on useless anti-ageing creams when we know these creams cannot work? We mightn't do it believing that we are destroying those women's hopes. But is that not showing a lack of faith in those women to cope? Religion is a worse source of false hope. Even St Therese of

Lisieux spoke of the times she was in the grip of despairing unbelief. And Mother Teresa agonised in a similar way.

Respecting a belief does not mean you will decline to work against the belief. Respecting others does not mean you will not try to get the job they are after.

The Catholic with all the harmful beliefs he or she adheres to, is not respecting others by supporting Catholic beliefs.

Religious belief is unnecessary. Therefore it is undeserving of respect.

Don't ask any critic to be silent or ask that your belief be respected until you prove that it really is a belief. Show that you are not mistaking a feeling that something is true for a belief. Show that you have a real belief and not a piece of self-deception.

To claim that all religions however contradictory are all as good as one another and equally true is just a cop-out and the claim is the rant of cowards. In the name of tolerance, the claim advocates intolerance towards those who reject this silly idea of "If you believe it, then it is true." It accuses them of bigotry and causing division. But one religion disagrees with and divides itself from others and pretending that all religions are the same and as good insults religion and pretends that the divisions do not exist. Believing your baby will be nourished by poison won't make the poison good for the baby.

The Church says that God inspired the gospels so that the life of the perfect man, Jesus, might be recorded for us to learn from it. Jesus in the gospels was iconoclastic - he criticised the beliefs of the Pharisees openly and even called them bastards and hypocrites to their faces and told parables that went out of their way to criticise them. He told the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector when he could have said proud man instead of Pharisee. The knowledgeable Christian will consider Jesus's behaviour as model behaviour. If Christians believe they should be iconoclasts then they cannot complain if people are iconoclastic in relation to Christian beliefs.

Catholics have to be repulsed by sin and what they see as error - their ditty is to love sinners and loathe sin. Catholics have to be offended by liberals and secularists. These advocate sin by watering down the faith or opposing it. Even if they are sincere they are still bad. The bad they do still has to be hated as much as ever. In fact, their bad is worse than sin for at least with sin the sinner knows he or she is bad. So it has to be hated far more than sin. Hating the sin is supposed to be about hating the evil rather than judging or blaming the sinner which illustrates the point. The Catholic faith must lead to intolerance.

Even if you do have to respect beliefs, you should not be asked to respect the harm that such beliefs do.

## YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO YOUR OPINION

Those who tell you when you state a fact that it is your opinion are being judgemental and intolerant of you. It is not up to them to accuse you of stating an opinion when you are stating a fact. They are undermining your knowledge by saying it is an opinion rather than knowledge.

The modern adage, "You have a right to your opinion/belief" is used by those who think they should think or believe whatever they WANT rather than think or believe whatever seems TRUE. Its a revolting misuse based on the wish to become immune to rational argument or persuasion. The only reason you have a right to your belief or opinion is that you use belief and opinion to find the truth or to improve your knowledge and accuracy. To say you have the right to believe or think what you want is ridiculous. It is not about what you want and you have no right to deceive people that it is. Grow up!

The person who tries to believe what he wants without regard to what is true is being intolerant of the fact that belief is based on evidence. He is not being fair or honest in this. He is not being supportive or tolerant towards those who want to base belief on good reasons. He will fear and tend to be bigoted towards those who endanger the facade he has created.

People say they have a right to their beliefs and opinions. That is actually a half truth. The correct thing is to say you have a right to your beliefs and opinions as long as you see them as helps on the journey to truth. If you say you have a right to your beliefs and opinions without any concern for truth then you are not being fair. Fairness is based on what is true. The person who sees the truth and calls it a lie is being unfair.

## SELF-DECEPTION IS INSINCERITY

Self-deception is when you convince yourself that you are sincere when you know deep down that you are not. The definition of self-deception that it is telling yourself that something you know is untrue or something you don't really believe is true.

Self-deception can lead to anything. If you can deceive yourself that God loves you, you can deceive yourself that you should be a suicide bomber for your reward will be in Heaven. Its only chance that determines when self-deception will do little harm.

Jesus spoke of a self-deceiving Pharisee in Luke 18. The Pharisee was not accepted by God even though he did loads of good works. The man's problem was that he believed he was superior in holiness to other people. He thanked God that he was holy. This shows that thinking God has helped you become holy does not mean you will avoid pride. If the man was really sincere in his belief, there would have been nothing to condemn in relation to his intentions. He would have meant well. He used self-deception and blinded himself. His being rejected by God indicates that God regards a person blinded by self-deception as bad as one that is just acting.

The Society of St Pius X administers absolutions from sin and annuls marriages and ordains priests though it is in a state of separation from Rome and without Rome's authorisation. In doing this, it effectively proves that it does not regard Rome and the pope as the head of the Church though it says it does.

The priests of this society act saintly but we know they cannot be sincere. They are deceiving themselves. They prove that no matter how sincere a religious person seems to be, they could still be deceiving themselves. Self-deception leads to intolerance for at some level you know what you say you believe is wrong and you won't want your self-deception to be exposed.

If somebody believes something that could lead people astray and cause trouble or believes in something outrageous, that person must not ask us to just take his word for it that he is sincere. He must prove it by proving himself to be sensible in relation to his belief. Good deeds would prove nothing. Just because you do good things, that does not prove your belief true and it does not prove your belief sincere.

When somebody says they believe in something and that belief is totally outrageous and even dangerous, assume they are insincere until they are proven sincere. You might think that is not very fair. But if we don't do that as a general rule we will never be able to tell insincerity from sincerity. And if we can't spot it in others, we won't spot it in ourselves either.

1 The absurdity of the doctrine is evidence that it is not genuinely believed.

2 The evil of the doctrine is evidence that it is not genuinely believed.

3 The inability of the person to prove or give strong evidence for the doctrine will be evidence that it is not genuinely believed. Why? Because you need very strong proof to be able to believe in a doctrine that is stupid or evil or both.

4 These problems tell us something about the kind of untrustworthy person we are dealing with.

Innocent until proven guilty has its exceptions. So does assume sincere unless proven insincere. Those four points tell us when to assume insincere unless proven sincere.

If you deceive yourself that God exists and that Hell exists, it follows that you are condoning the suffering you say God permits to happen and part of you believes this is wrong. Your faith would be vile filth. Even God wouldn't praise it.

The more a person fails to live or study the religion or hear the other sides to the story the more you can suspect self-deceit.

Most religious faith has to be self-deceit if not all. Thus we should assume self-deceit until it is proven different. If a believer wants us to think he or she is not deceiving themselves, then let them strive to be as consistent as possible in their religious thinking and have what they do match what they say they believe.

Even if a religion or philosophy is true, you could still be using self-deception to "believe" in it.

The opinion of most people is that religion is dangerous and causes wars. Those who dispute this, have no problem saying that what is dangerous is religious self-deception not necessarily religion. Religion is self-deception so that's the end of that!

Many of us believe strange and outrageous things. Not all. Many naturalists and atheists make assumptions and have beliefs that are just as ludicrous as the silliest of Catholic doctrines. Perhaps this tells us that we should not try to refute religion but just let it be. But if we keep silent about the weirdness of other people's beliefs just because we may have bizarre ideas ourselves then the world will never progress. If I want to challenge the beliefs of others I need to be open to letting them challenge me as well.

Why is it that you can disprove a religious doctrine to a priest or theologian and they can ascend the pulpit the next day to say the doctrine is true? Why do they persist in saying what their minds must tell them is nonsense is true? Because they are experts at self-deceit or never have been true believers anyway. They might be pretending to believe.

It is said that it is a mistake for critics of religion to focus a lot on disproving a religion rationally and expecting its hearers to depart from the religion or at least say they don't believe in it any more. It could be a mistake indeed when we are dealing with ordinary believers but its still worth a try. The believers may be only professed believers in the refuted religion not real ones. But it is certainly not a mistake when the priests and theologians and the apologists for the faith are the hearers.

If God comes first, it follows that we must believe in him. Perhaps sincerity is all we need? But if God comes first then we cannot put him first unless we believe. In so far as we disbelieve we do not put him first. Can a woman give her heart fully to a man when part of her does not believe that he is lovable? The supporters of the God concept bully people to believe.

God by definition is the only that that truly and ultimately matters. Belief in him then has to be treated not as a belief but as a fact. Treating it as a belief would indicate that you have an attitude of, "There is probably a God and in so far as he is probable I will put him first. I am willing to abandon him should the evidence cast doubt on his existence." That would not be approaching God 100% or even trying to. The God tenet is intrinsically fundamentalist.

What about the view, "God may be the only thing that matters. If the best we can do is believe in him then he cannot expect to be treated as a proven fact though he is not"? If you believe in God 55% you only love him 55%. Would you not think a person is being hypocritical if he said he loved his wife absolutely and then admitted that he only believes he does it? Belief makes absolute love impossible. God cannot be your God if you only believe in him. Christians seem to hold that belief in God by some miracle is the same thing as a fact. For them belief is full certainty.

Schizophrenia is characterised by the following symptoms: You think your inner chatter is something outside of you chatting to you. It is a break in brain functions. Your emotions become separated from reality meaning you could laugh at the death of somebody dear to you. Believers feel that God is inside their minds talking to them. This is definitely schizophrenia of a type that does not always need medication.

**CONCLUSION:** True respect for belief means challenging belief. That alone is respecting the belief and the person. Silence respects the belief not the person.